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WAX FLOWERS UNDER GLASS

HOW queerly old-fashioned the chattels, clothes and customs that belonged to the later Victorian period appear today—the steel engravings, what-nots, wax flowers under glass, congress gaiters, anti-macassars—to protect the furniture from oiled hair—the fainting fits, smelling salts, shirts that buttoned in the back, New Year's calls, Sunday clothes, and ball-players with side-whiskers. And how curiously modern in comparison, for instance, are Colonial furniture, Georgian silver and Tudor ceilings. Whether or not at some future time the possessions of the seventies and eighties shall become cherished heirlooms, and whether with greater antiquity they shall assume a certain quaint charm, remains to be seen; nevertheless the applied art and manners of the period being influenced and permeated by puritan austerity, show a priggish formality repugnant to a more joyous age, and give little promise of becoming treasured or copied. The puritan has always distrusted and persecuted Beauty, and to him Joy has ever been a synonym for Sin.

In "Memories Discreet and Indiscreet*," a lady who describes herself as "A Woman of No Importance," reflects life and customs in the greater part of the work, which, to the younger generation at least, must seem almost as remote as those of the Greeks under Pericles. To the elders these reminiscences will provoke a certain wan smile, and are comparable to discovering, in some hidden drawer, a faded

photograph on which are faintly limned the features of a sweetheart loved in the springtime of life.

The title of the book, however, is somewhat misleading, as a careful search fails to disclose any "indiscreet" memories—or at least any which would be deemed indiscreet today; and the lady is evidently of considerable importance as she appears to be on terms of intimacy with the County set in England and the aristocracy of the Continent, and to have met, under conditions of easy familiarity, a number of sovereigns.

In referring to her marriage, the author speaks reproachfully of the state of ignorance in which young girls of her period were kept, and expresses herself with rather more than mid-Victorian vigor; although woman-like she is inclined to draw a general conclusion from an individual instance:

Thus I was shot out into the realities of life after the manner of those days, in a condition of absolute black ignorance of practically every fact of life that would be almost unbelievable to girls of that age today—happily for them. The fact that I had not the faintest idea of what I was doing was a matter of legitimate self-congratulation to my parents as a proof of the success in the upbringing they had bestowed on their child. It seems a little incongruous that a man who, say, for instance, murdered an aged aunt, should be regarded as such a naughty fellow, and probably hanged, while the people who launched their daughters into life before they knew what they were about should be adjudged quite praiseworthy. The gentleman who murdered his aunt had only shortened an old life, while the others had done their best to ruin a young one.

And as an evidence of the camouflage which was used in those days to mask what the young lady reformers of today

*Memories Discreet and Indiscreet, by A Woman of No Importance. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

would call the "facts of life" we are told of a visit by the author and her mother to a friend of the family:

I was either sent into the garden by my lone self, while the old ladies talked secrets, or I sat and listened to their conversation. I could not always understand what they were talking about; whenever my mother asked, "And how is Mrs. George Lowther?" the answer never seemed to vary, "Oh, thank you, she is a little busy just now." I wondered what she was always so busy about, she did not seem a very strenuous person. At last I discovered, when a little older, that it was Lady Lowther's delicate way of explaining that the family was being augmented, time after time, in the hope a son would put in an appearance, which in time he did, so all was well. It has now become quite a family expression—"Being a little busy!"

A Reckless Empress

The lady evidently was a keen sports-woman and many of her reminiscences refer to the hunting-field. Here is a spirited pen portrait of the late Empress Elisabeth of Austria:

This remarkable woman's appearance in the English hunting field was very memorable. Austria seemed as remote and far away a place to the average country squire in those days as does "Ruretanian" in *The Prisoner of Zenda* to the schoolboys of today. Yet she was an Empress straight from these realms of romance. Imperious and beautiful, flashing across our grass countries in the wake of the dare-devil Bay Middleton. Both superbly mounted, and riding as if they carried spare necks in their pockets. She not only rode hard but recklessly—for the same reason that so many have ridden recklessly—to leave unpleasant memories behind. . . . What a beautiful woman she was and what a curious mixture of unconventional and imperial dignity, jealous of her rights, yet indifferent to comment.

The Serbian Tragedy

The bomb which was the immediate cause of the world war, was exploded in Sarajevo, and the Balkans have for many years been a center of international intrigue and chicanery; a land of mystery and romance in which the unchanging East has met the progressive West. While long regarded as the "powder magazine of Europe" by the statesmen, it was the tragic death of King Alexander and Queen Draga which brought the Balkans and particularly Serbia prominently be-

fore the public eye in this country. A new version of the tale of the tragedy, which discloses how nearly the regicides failed of their purpose, appears for the first time in print:

The King and Queen had retired for the night when they heard the explosion of the doors being blown open, the general commotion going on in the Palace and the sound of shots being fired. The Queen had for some time been in nervous anticipation of some trouble, knowing she was not popular, and now it had come.

They both fled into a room or large cupboard adjoining the Queen's dressing-room, where the state robes were kept. This place was entered by one of those secret doors occasionally met with in the homely palaces and country places of the Continent. No one unacquainted with the room would have known how to find this door as it was papered over to match the walls of the room, and there was no knob or handle to attract attention. The door was opened by pressing a panel, and opened towards those wishing to enter.

The murderers had been searching in the cellars of the Palace, being led there by a faithful retainer, who hoped by so doing to give the Royal couple time to escape. Not finding those they sought the ruffians shot their guide and proceeded to the private apartments of the King and Queen, but they were empty and they came to the conclusion that the couple had escaped. The disappointed and drunken assassins then began smashing the furniture and shooting indiscriminately right and left; one shot penetrated the secret door and poor terrified Queen Draga screamed. This betrayed their hiding place. In a few minutes they were brutally murdered, their faces slashed and hacked and their bodies also otherwise mutilated. But for that fatal scream, that want of self-control and presence of mind, there is every reason to believe that the King and Queen might both have escaped and the tragedy been averted.

Sidelights on K. of K.

The author's husband was in the army and many of her tales are of army people and life. She relates a story of Kitchener which puts him in rather a different light than that in which he is usually pictured. During a mess dinner a young subaltern donned Kitchener's helmet in the latter's absence and proceeded to amuse the company with imitations of K.'s manner:

Meanwhile the real Lord Kitchener had returned in person to look for his cap. Seeing it on the head of the cheeky young subaltern, he quickly put the cap belonging to the acting youth upon his head, it being some sizes too small for the Gen-

eral, and waited until the pantomime should be over. Suddenly the laughter ceased and all the faces grew long, for they had discovered the smiling face of the Chief looking at them round the door with a rakish-looking cap perched on one side of his head. Could it be possible this was the strict and rather alarming commanding officer, looking as if he had been out for the night on a spree?

And the following anecdote gives a hint that sinister forebodings may have been in Kitchener's mind before he set out on the fatal voyage of the "Hampshire:"

Lord Kitchener always kept a couple of cars standing outside the War Office day and night—in readiness to be jumped into at a moment's notice. The day before his last fateful journey, as he was walking into his office, he saw one of his chauffeurs standing near. He stopped and spoke to the man, saying, "You are married, are you not?" The reply being in the affirmative, Lord Kitchener continued, "Then I will not take you with me tomorrow, I will take Broome instead." So Broome and his car went with their master—and will be seen no more until the sea gives up her dead.

Lord William Beresford and Others

Lord William Beresford has been always something of a wag as well as a dare-devil sailor, and the anecdote related is quite characteristic:

Lord William had bet he would carry the fifteen-stone general from the foot of the hill below Government House to the Club, a distance of a quarter of a mile or more; the general closed with the bet. A small crowd of friends collected to see the show. Lord William arrived to the moment punctual as usual, threw off his coat and rolled up his sleeves; the general smiled complacently.

Lord W.: "Now then, sir, are you ready?"

General: "Yes, and waiting."

Lord W.: "Then strip, please!"

General: "Then what?"

Lord W.: "Strip, please. I said I would carry you, I said nothing about carrying your clothes!"

The incident which the lady relates of Lord Cardigan is probably one of those she might have had in mind to justify her use of the word "indiscreet" in her title:

A subaltern once asked him for three days' leave, adding it was *most particular*—to which Lord Cardigan as Colonel said, "But, my boy, your troop's for musketry." On being pressed as to what was *most particular* he at first demurred to reply. Lord Cardigan to encourage him said, "Now between man and man tell me why do you want three days' leave?" "Oh! well, sir, if you put it like that, I want to bolt with another man's

wife." "Most Hussar like," answered Lord Cardigan, "of course you can have the leave, why the——didn't you say so before!"

Nor was life entirely monotonous in those days, as this gossip about one of the outdoor sports of the period indicates:

One of the incidents in Colonel King-Harman's earlier days in London was frequently brought up against him by his political opponents. The Cremorne affair, when he and a number of his chosen friends, having dined well, set forth to wreck the Gardens, carrying out their intentions fairly thoroughly, finishing up by throwing the police into the pond, making hay generally and returning to his club triumphant.

How the Crown Prince Was Dismissed

One of the most interesting episodes of the volume is an account of how the Crown Prince of Germany was requested to leave the house of a high English official which he was visiting while in India. It appears that during his stay at the official residence the Crown Prince took occasion to visit the house of a lady, with whom he had become enamoured, at a time when he should have been attending a state function in his honor. With typical Teutonic disregard for others he failed even to send word of the change in his plans, and great was the consternation among those responsible for the safety of the Hun Prince. The story concludes:

In due course the chastened youth returned to the official residence where he was a guest and went to bed, becoming the Crown Prince again during the process. Later in the morning came a message from his host to say that a train was being prepared to convey His Royal Highness to Calcutta.

"Calcutta," quoth the Crown Prince amazed, "I am not due there for a long time yet. What are you talking about?"

What passed between host and guest is best known to themselves, but rumour stated that it was pointed out to the Crown Prince that when a guest behaved in such a manner in a house of the entertainer, the responsibility became more than he cared to undertake and that the train was now quite ready to start.

A cable had been sent to Berlin indicating that the Prince's ways were oppressive, and Papa had at once replied, "Send him home at once." So that is why he hastened away in a lowly liner instead of a cruiser.